



**For immediate release**

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**Contact:** Drenda Niemann, Public Health Officer, 406-457-8910

## **New Public Health Order limits large gatherings and events to 250**

Helena – Effective Wednesday, July 8, at 12 am, Lewis and Clark Public Health is issuing a Public Health Order limiting events and gatherings to no more than 250 people.

Governor Bullock’s Phase 2 “Reopening the Big Sky” directive says non-essential social and recreational gatherings of individuals outside of a home or place of residence of greater than 50 people is not advisable, if a distance of at least 6 feet between individuals cannot be maintained. **Events with groups larger than 50 people should be cancelled unless physical distancing can be maintained.** The directive also states anyone planning an event with more than 50 people should consult with their local public health office on a plan to implement adequate social distancing.

The new LCPH Order states events and gatherings between 50 and 249 people must adhere to the following:

- Submit a detailed plan to LCPH outlining protective measures and environmental controls to reduce the risk of disease transmission at least 10 days prior to event or gathering.
- Maintain strict physical distancing of 6 feet between individuals or between groups of family members.
- Follow guidance provided by LCPH regarding event planning and ensure plan is adhered to at the time of the event or gathering.

The order will be enforced through a complaint driven process. Law enforcement will observe and document violations of the order and report them to the Lewis and Clark County Attorney for enforcement against the event or gathering organizer and attendees. Event or gathering organizers may face a misdemeanor charge under MCA 50-2-124 for each attendee at the event or gathering.

Large gatherings over 250 persons in Lewis and Clark County may spread COVID-19 to the extent that LCPH’s ability to perform case isolation, contact tracing and quarantine of close contacts to cases is overwhelmed. An outbreak could also exceed the capacity of services, personnel, equipment, supplies and facilities. Many cases in the state and in Lewis and Clark County have been tracked back to large events.

“The COVID-19 situation is changing across the Country, in Montana and Lewis and Clark County,” said Lewis and Clark Public Health Officer Drenda Niemann. “We continue to have event organizers moving forward with large events despite Public Health advising against it. We asked residents to do the right thing and limit or cancel their events, and we haven’t seen that happen; therefore, we have to move to the next step and put an enforcement tool in place.”

Last week, LCPH warned that groups larger than 50 people should be cancelled unless physical distancing can be maintained. Large events and gatherings are high-risk environments that are inherently not safe during a pandemic. The nature of most large events and gatherings do not naturally facilitate the necessary physical distancing to ensure safety from disease spread.



“Reopening and staying open relies on both community and personal responsibility,” added Niemann. “Large events have the potential to cause large outbreaks, leading to disease and death in our community.”

LCPH continues to urge people to practice what has been learned over the last few months, such as physical distancing, wearing a face covering, wash hands, and sanitize surfaces to protect ourselves and others.

If you have questions, please call Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8900.

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